



News Release

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Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding

(Salt Lake City) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) supports U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin’s call for nationwide support of breastfeeding. Benjamin and the UDOH are calling on all Americans to take 20 concrete steps to support mothers in reaching their personal breastfeeding goals.

It is well established that breastfeeding gives children the healthiest possible start in their lives, but it has also encountered barriers in different areas of society. Some of the 20 steps that can be taken to break down these barriers include: developing programs to educate fathers and grandmothers about breastfeeding; strengthening programs that provide mother-to-mother support and peer counseling within the community; ensuring that maternity care practices are fully supportive of breastfeeding; providing education and training in breastfeeding for all health professionals who care for women and children; and ensuring that employers establish and maintain comprehensive, high-quality lactation support programs for their employees.

“This is a very important document,” said Patrice Isabella, UDOH Physical Activity, Nutrition and Obesity Program (PANO) Nutrition Coordinator. “It asks everyone in a community from the family to health care providers and businesses to remove barriers so mothers can breastfeed their children without embarrassment or worry,” added Isabella.

Breastfeeding advocates say that, when women are able to reach their personal breastfeeding goals, it helps the entire population achieve optimum health.

PANO and its partners are working to remove breastfeeding barriers by encouraging and helping businesses to start lactation programs and policies, educating health care providers on lactation

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and the importance of breastfeeding for at least six months, and reaching out with many other awareness and education messages.

In Utah, about 90% of mothers initiate breastfeeding when their children are born, making Utah one of the states with the highest breastfeeding initiation rates in the nation. However, by the time the child is six months old, only 16% of mothers are still exclusively breastfeeding their children. Exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months is recommended for optimal health.

For more information on *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding* visit www.health.utah.gov/obesity.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.